BALCAN CAN CONTEMPORARY 7

PERFORMANCE ART

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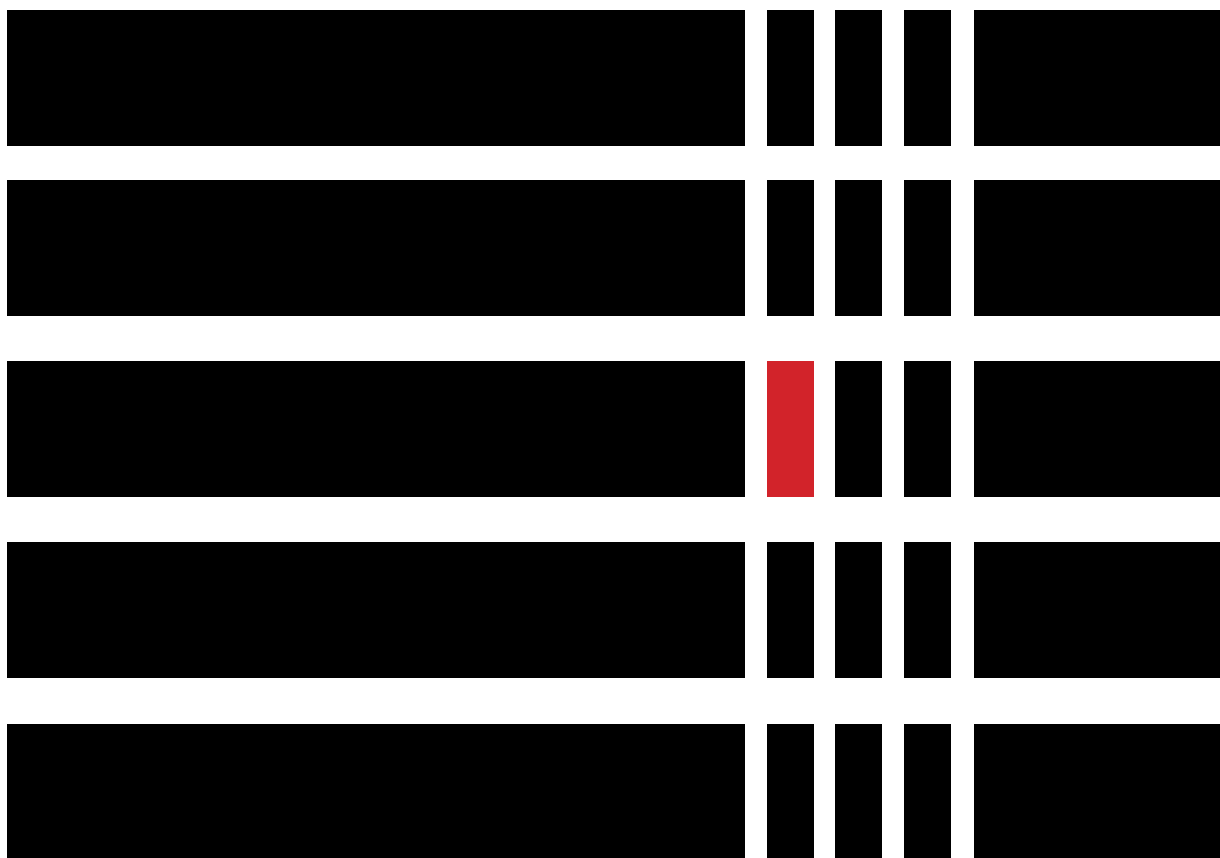
Performance art is making a comeback – it is what everyone says. It is an artform that usually functions best on its own myth, and the words "you had to be there" are often the best what we can come up with when we want to talk about something we have seen that falls under the performance art category.

The BCC issue dedicated to performance art will try to say a bit more than that in the text by Suzana Marjanić who will remind us of some of the more memorable performance art that took place in the Balkans in the past.

From there, we will discuss what is the position of a context in art and how it can change (art?). Where does political fit in all this and it is a question that seems to be more important each day – as we slowly wake up to an austere reality. Unfortunately, we might be waking up too late. But at least we are here – nobody will tell us "you had to be there".

Zvonimir Dobrović

BALKAN PER-FORMANCE/ ACTION ART AS SEEN IN A REAR-VIEW MIRROR FROM ZAGREB

BY SUZANA MARJANIĆ

Since the editors of the *Balkan Can Contemporary* journal have expressed their interest in an article on some ten key performance art events in the Balkans or, more precisely, in ex-Yugoslavia, I have decided to observe the relationship between (performance) art and crime. With this somewhat limited theme, I thought it would be easier and simpler to select ten performance art events from the extensive ex-YU visual scene[1]. Besides that, the art and crime theme was the slogan of the Rijeka Festival of New Art (FONA), which was held in the "Palach" Club and organised by MMC d.o.o. in 2007. In other words, as Branko Cerovac, the art historian and curator, clarified in connection with the FONA, that theme has been either implicitly or explicitly the "scarlet thread" from Antiquity until the present day in discussions and conflicts regarding the question of art between an array of aestheticists and moralists. And in further "simplification" of the review, I have chosen to observe the theme of the ten or so key performance art events in the Balkans, that is, in ex-Yugoslavia, from the "Croatian" perspective (again, more precisely – from the Zagreb perspective) for two reasons. Since I was born in 1969, I did not, of course, follow live the performance art, actions and happenings in the era of the Croatian/Yugoslav neo-avant-garde, but shall write about them from the perspective of how that performance practice in processual art was noted in the monographs of individual art historians. The second reason for this decision was the year 1990, when the flow of information between the republics of ex-YU was blocked for well-known reasons of war. (I should add that it is impossible, even today for example, to find in the bookshops and libraries in Zagreb a monograph on the Belgrade group Magnet, which I mention in this selection of ex-YU performance art events.) That petrified state, in the case of the Zagreb environment, started slowly to crumble, I would say, due to the founding of the Autonomous Culture Factory ATTACK! in 1997. Hence, I shall be looking at the ten (more or less) key Balkan, i.e. ex-Yugoslavian, performance art events from the Zagreb perspective where, due to the local situation, the issue arises of the greater visibility of the centre in comparison with the artists on the outskirts (i.e. outside the so-called Zagreb metropolis), who are usually ignored in the media. However, let us start in some sort of order by looking into the textual rear-view mirror on the relationship between (performance) art and crime. I have taken a twofold view: namely, from the aspect in the framework of which art starts to be experienced as crime by the authorities (as, for example, in the individual 1998 guerrilla action Black Peristyle, whose author was called in for questioning at the Sector for Terrorism and War Crimes); as well as from the aspect when art observes that in an engaged manner (that which is political, and that which is criminal), which happens in this Balkan planetarium as when Marina Abramović did so (in connection with this second aspect) in her performance art and installation Balkan Baroque (1997).

Red Peristyle (Split, 1968) and Black Peristyle (Split, 1998)

The collective guerrilla action Red Peristyle is defined as the first processual action in Croatia and ex-YU at that time, when a group of young Split beats carried out their own first action. On the night between January 10 and 11, 1968, they painted red the stone floor of the late-Antiquity Peristyle, the main square of Diocletian's Palace in Split, and declared themselves to be the Red Peristyle Group. This action of painting the Peristyle red, as a protest against the general state of culture in the country, concluded with police arrests, and with only some people seeing in this, as an art historian Davor Matičević recalls, "a procedure similar to the classic Dalí addition of moustaches to the Mona Lisa"[2]. Let us recall the odium to which this group of beats (according to the papers they were Pave Dulčić, Slaven Sumić,

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[1]   As part of the selected key Balkan, i.e. ex-YU, performance art events, I have tried to single out actions/performance art events in the framework of the terms of reference of (performance) art and crime from each individual former republic and the two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina).

[2]   Cf. Matičević, Davor. "Zagrebački krug." In: Nova umjetnička praksa 1966-1978 (ed. Marijan Susovski), Zagreb, 1978, pp. 21-28.

Marjanić, Suzana. "Akcijski mitoslov ili o intervencionističkim korekcijama: Crveni, Zeleni i Crni Peristil." In: Krležini dani u Osijeku 2008. Tekst, podtekst i intertekst u hrvatskoj drami i kazalištu (ed. Branko Hećimović), Zagreb, Osijek, 2009, pp. 204-222.

Radovan Kogej and five other unnamed youngsters, two students of the Education College and the others from the Applied Arts School in Split) was exposed in the newspaper reports: "Vandalism by a group of youths – Red Peristyle", "Split Peristyle painted red – Attack on Diocletian", "After painting the Split Peristyle red – no red faces".

Thirty years after Red Peristyle, Igor Grubić continued on from that action-intervention with his "recycling", urban intervention, individual guerrilla action Black Peristyle, which was effected in black and easily-removable polycolour paint or, in Željko Jerman's aphoristic definition – the *red darkness* of the Communist League of Yugoslavia was followed by reactionary *black darkness* of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)[3]; instead of the red square from 1968, in 1998 we were given a black hole, which Igor Grubić described as – "a black smear on the soul of every individual who could make a contribution to reality being different, but did not do so". Grubić interpreted the red square of the Red Peristyle as one of Maljevič's characters and, following that logic, responded to the other supremacist character of that author – with a black circle, adding to it the context of social criticism and/or the question of individual accountability at the time of the recent war in the Balkans.

Red Peristyle, 1968 (Photo by Zvonimir Buljević)

The OHO Group, the *Triglav* action (Ljubljana, 1968)

I am singling out the OHO group's action Triglav from neighbouring Slovenia, which also had several re-enactments. However, let us recall the action itself from 1968: three members of the OHO Group – Milenko Matanović, David Nez and Drago Dellabernardina – draped themselves in black fabric in Zvezda Park, symbolising Mount Triglav: they were covered with a black sheet which reached down to their feet, leaving only their hippy faces/heads visible. Through their *tableau vivant*, the OHO Group subverted the emblem of Slovenian national identity – Mount Triglav – which is shown on the Slovenian flag and coat-of-arms. Today it is also on the Euro 50 cent coin, which confirms that Triglav is an enduring emblem of Slovenian identity, with the shift from one of the republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to an independent nation, finally melding with the other small parts of the European Union[4].

Thirty-six years later the Irwin Group transposed the performance – the living sculpture of the OHO Group – into a colouristically aestheticised photograph (a photo-performance) entitled Like to Like: Mount Triglav (2003-2004), upon which three Irwin members stand like OHO's Triglav in Ljubljana's Zvezda Park, covered in snow[5].

Later, on August 6th 2007, Janez Janša, Janez Janša and Janez Janša, that is, three artists – Davide Grassi, Emil Hrvatin and Žiga Kariž – who adopted the name and surname of the prime minister of the Republic of Slovenia (2004-2008), presented their Triglav performance that the OHO Group had interventionally initiated in 1968. They called their video-performance Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav [with wordplay on T/triglav, which means three heads in Slovenian], as well as in the form of a golden sculpture entitled Monument to National Contemporary Art (Golden Triglav). One of the anniversaries commemorated by that "mountainous" performance – that also took place as a re-enactment of the OHO's action and a re-enactment of the "photographic" performance by the Irwin Group – was the sixteenth anniversary of the foundation of the independent Republic of Slovenia.

I would also mention the action 3xno brezglavi Triglav [3xno Headless Triglav], which was organised by Dani Kavaš in 2008 and showed three performers in the plains of Prekmurje (that is regarded as the

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[3]   Cf. Jerman, Željko. 2002. Crveni i Crni Peristil. "Jutarnji list", Zagreb, 3 August 2002, p. 36.
        Peraica, Ana. 2006. "Anonymous Artist, Nameless Hero, Unknown History." In: East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe. Irwin, ed. London / Los Angeles: Afterall and MIT Press, pp. 163-174.

[4]   Quaranta, Domenico. 2009. "Re:akt! Things that Happen Twice." Frakcija 51-52:98-107.
[5]   Šuvaković, Miško. "3 x Triglav: Controversies and Problems Regarding Mount Triglav." In: Janez Janša, Janez Janša and Janez Janša, eds. NAME Readymade, Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2008, pp. 767-782.

poorest Slovenian region). The difference from the earlier Triglav performances lay in the fact that the heads of these performers were covered with a black sheet (the central head being at a lower level) since, as they said ironically, they did not want to reveal themselves because of the pressure of the social crisis, ostensible democracy, brutal capitalism and clericalist-Fascism[6].

At the DOPUST Festival (Days of Open Performance Art in Split) at Bačvice in 2010, the Rijeka artist Nemanja Cvijanović together with Marko Marković, the organiser of DOPUST, and the Rijeka multimedia artist Milijana Babić, performed a re-interpretation of Triglav on the Adriatic Sea "as a token of gratitude from the Croatian people to the Slovenians for the reasonable outcome of the Referendum on Arbitration regarding the Treaty on the Border with Croatia". The artist emphasised that Mount Triglav for the Slovenians, just as is the Adriatic Sea for the Croatians, is an allegorically equalised symbol linked with the nation and the state through an artificially created identity. On the occasion of that re-interpretation, Milijana Babić stated from her feminist viewpoint that she was at the peak of that symbolic Triglav, adding that it was a great success for a woman.

Hence, that is how the view of this key Slovenian performance art was rounded out once again by the Croatian perspective, but still from a marginal perspective – far from the Zagreb centre.

The OHO Group: the Triglav action (Ljubljana, 1968)

Tomislav Gotovac: *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I love you!), Homage to Howard Hawks and his film Hatari, 1961* (Zagreb, 1981)

Tom Gotovac is inscribed in Croatian art history as the first streaker in Europe; Gotovac's first public denuding was known as *Streaking Naked through the Centre of Town*, which he performed on Sremska Street in Belgrade in 1971. However, for this retrospection on the performance art of ex-YU I have chosen his performance action (the 10th action-object) *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt*[7]. That now cult street action in which he exhibited his naked body was entitled in full as *Lying Naked on the Asphalt, Kissing the Asphalt (Zagreb, I love you!), Homage to Howard Hawks and his Film Hatari, 1961*. It was produced symbolically on November 13 (a Friday), precisely at noon as marked by the cannon that sounds in the old town of Grič (in Zagreb)[8]. Tom came out of the entrance into the yard of Ilica Street 8, walked nude along Ilica and round Trg Republike (Republic Square), and kissed the asphalt. His costume design: his naked body, shaved head, shaved eyebrows and a wristwatch. After he had declared "Zagreb, I love you!" he lay on the asphalt and kissed it, the inevitable sequel to which was his being taken into police custody. The performance had lasted seven minutes. In Gotovac's words, the policeman who took him to the police station announced that he had arrested someone "who was stark naked, walked round the square yelling 'Zagreb, I love you' and wasn't aggressive."

The Hawks film told of hunters capturing animals in Africa for zoos, and started with an unsuccessful hunt for a rhino, which Gotovac used as a symbol of the artist on the run from the police state. Several times Gotovac was to point out, looking at the cult photograph on which he is shown lying prone in Ilica in front of the Church of the Wounded Jesus, that he was making a pastiche of the position of the priest before the mass. His figure on the asphalt in Ilica recalled the rhino or, in his words, a pure and

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6   Kavaš, Dani. "Galerija AKCIJA." (http://www.kavasdani.org/galerija/akcije/akcije.html).
7   The first act of public nudity in Zagreb was accomplished by Tom(islav) Gotovac in the production of a sound object, the 100 (Whistling) action on what was previously called Republic Square as part of the 10th Zagreb Music Bienniale on May 12, 1979 (between noon and one o'clock) in which 102 persons took part, i.e., 100 performers with whistles, one leader, alias Tom Gotovac, and his assistant.
        Cf. Tomislav Gotovac. Texts by Ješa Denegri, Goran Trbuljak, Hrvoje Turković [eds. Aleksandr Battista Ilić and Diana Nenadić]. Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez, Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, 2003.
8   His street performance art, actions and action-objects he performed started at noon sharp, with the sounding of the Grič cannon.

candid animal, an "animal that just goes onwards." In Swahili, as he pointed out, Hatari means "Help," and this work meant "Help. I am a lone rhino. Hatari!"

Tomislav Gotovac: Lying naked on the asphalt, kissing the asphalt (Zagreb, I love you!), Homage to Howard Hawks and his film Hatari, 1961 (1981)
(Photo by Ivan Posavec)

Marina Abramović, a performance piece and installation work *Balkan Baroque* (Venice Biennale, 1997); three-channel video (colour, sound), cow bones, copper sinks and tubs filled with black water, a bucket, soap, metal brush, a dress stained with blood.

Briefly, the story is as follows: Marina Abramović was supposed to represent the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the Venetian Biennale in 1997, but the decision on her selection was altered and Montenegro, which was proposing the artist for the national pavilion, chose Vojo Stanić (an artist I particularly admire because of his painting Boka Bay Night/ Bokeljska noć). Nonetheless, Marina Abramović did participate in the central exhibition at the invitation of the chief curator of that year's Bienniale, Germano Celant; she received the Golden Lion Award for her installation Balkan Baroque, which was performed and exhibited at the Italian pavilion.

The description of the performance/installation work goes as follows: "Sitting on top of 1,500 cow bones in a white dress, she spent four days, six hours a day, washing each of these bloody bones, surrounded by projected images of her parents and herself. The accompanying sound included her recorded description of methods used in the Balkans for killing rats and her singing of her native folksongs. The performance progression was made visceral due to the unbearable heat of the basement room and fetid smell." [9]

In other words, as the artist herself explains her definition of mental Baroque: "(...) the Balkans are a place where civilisations enter into contact and mingle, creating what I define as the 'mental Baroque', a sort of permanent intertwining of love, hate, tenderness, passion, sex, fear, and shame." [10]

Marina Abramović: Balkan Baroque (Venice Biennale, 1997)

All the actions of the Magnet Group (Belgrade, 1996-1998); all the actions of the Led Art/Art Clinic Group – the *Led Art* Multimedia Centre in Novi Sad; and all the actions/performances of the Škart Collective

Here I would like to mention the brave guerrilla action Requiem for Serbia (16th June 1997) performed

[9]   Cf. Marina Abramović. "Balkan Baroque." (http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/balkan-baroque).
       Abramović, Marina. Balkan Epic. (ed. Adelina von Fürstenberg). Milano: Skira, 2006.
[10]   Cf. Alfano Miglietti, Francesca. 2003. Extreme Bodies. The Use and Abuse of the Body in Art. Milano: Skira, p. 94.

by Nune Popović, a member of the Belgrade Magnet Group, when he brought a slaughtered, sacrificed pig with the word SERBIA written upon it in black paint (in the Cyrillic script) to present to Milošević in front of the Parliament of Serbia.

As they described as their objective and mode of work – the Magnet Group tried to present themselves to the public in a creative and non-violent way, participating in the mass struggle against the totalitarian regime of that time of Slobodan Milošević. Their aim was the creation of a new society in Serbia, so they chose the streets of Belgrade as the venue of their activities in order to achieve the most effective reaction among passers-by and chance travellers. In that process, as they said on their website, their actions were performed in guerrilla fashion, as a surprise for the regime and the public, while the date and place of the location of their actions was communicated in a conspiratorial way to the local media and the correspondents of the global media[11].

In addition to the Magnet Group from Belgrade, we certainly must mention the actions and performance art events of the Škart Collective, which was founded in 1990 at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade; along with the Led Art Collective, founded in Belgrade in 1993 on the initiative of the painter Nikola Džafo, which all emerged from the resistance to the politics and policies of the ruling regime during the 1990s. In January 2000, Led Art transformed into the Led Art Multimedia Centre with its seat in Novi Sad (in Vojvodina)[12], and the Art Clinic project was also initiated, as a response to the "sick society in which we live," at the end of 2002. One of their first actions in that process was the "freezing" of art projects as an act of conservation of art works for some better times to come. Or, as the members of the Led Art Collective [led meaning ice] themselves said: *Work with ice, incidental graphics, photographing against spells, expeditions to the rubbish dumps – they are the elements of artistic magic that should free the consumer of fear, prevent evil and free fall and restore faith in redemption.* [13]

The Magnet Group: Requiem for Serbia (Belgrade, 16th June 1997)
(Photo by Danilo Danilović)

Vlasta Delimar: *Marička* (2006)

In the performance entitled *Tražim ženu* [I'm Looking for a Woman] from 1996, Vlasta Delimar carried out the execution of a hen, transferring the basic role (in her words) "of a woman's work" – cooking – into a gallery venue. The artist recycled an almost identical act of destruction in her performance of *Marička* in 2006, ten years later, the only difference in that act of the destruction being that the victim was a rooster. The performance was given as part of the Intime [Intimacies] cycle by the curator, Jasmina Bavoljak, at the Klović Palace Gallery in Zagreb. The artist tried to justify the destructive-constructive act in the same way; as in 1996, she spoke of a translation of a fragment of everyday life, in this case that of her aunt Marička and, as Delimar underscored, "the unfortunate nature of female destiny in a small community." However, unlike the 1996 performance that drew reaction only from

[11]   Cf. the monograph Nune Popović i grupa Magnet – Živela sloboda! (www.magnet.nune.biz). Novi Sad: Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, 2011.
[12]   Vojvodina, with its capital Novi Sad, is an autonomous province of Serbia.
[13]   Cf. Evropski konteksti umetnosti 20. veka u Vojvodini, eds. Miško Šuvaković and Dragomir Ugren. Novi Sad: Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, 2008.
         Led Art, Dokumenti vremena, 1993-2003. Novi Sad, Beograd: Multimedijalni centar Led Art, 2004.

the Animal Welfare Society, the performance Marička (2006) drew the attention of Animal Friends Croatia (founded in 2001)[14] as well as the media, whose reaction was divided for and against the act of sacrificing an animal victim in the name of art. Of all her performances, that Vlasta Delimar performance was the most visible in the media and, together with the above-mentioned guerrilla action Black Peristyle (1998), became the most highly media monitored action/performance in Croatia since 1990/1991. Among other, the artist herself stated that she felt that a "bloody Marička" media lynch had been initiated against her, adding that she would duly pay the misdemeanour fine.[15]

Nada Prlja: *Advanced Science of Morphology* (2006)

In that same year, 2006, Nada Prlja, a Macedonian artist[16] who lives in London, presented her public art project the Advanced Science of Morphology in that city. There she critically examined something that was sure to take place, despite the results of the "democratic" referendums – the unification of the former Yugoslavian republics with the European Union, and what they stood to lose by doing so. Namely, the artist devised 26 combinations of the flags of the former Yugoslavian republics, based on the number of member states in the EU at that time. The idea behind that public project was the creation of the transformed republic flags of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into a new form of Unity in which, for example, the Croatian and Macedonian flags permeated one another through installation and de-installation. With that national installation and de-installation of the political morphology, the flags of the members of the European Union were replaced for a time (May 22 – June 6 2006) in the park at Marble Arch in London. Marble Arch was built in 1828 at what had been the site of public executions from 1388 to 1793, and the flags of the European Union member-states had stood unfurled there since 1990. As part of her public project, the Advanced Science of Morphology, Nada Prlja managed to raise imaginary flags – the transformed flags of the republics of the former Yugoslavia – at a politically significant location, in place of the 26 flags of the members of the European Union at that time. Nada Prlja presented her public project as a live art event – with a procession of those "edited" flags that went from Marble Arch to the Space Gallery, as a performance of walking with flags, with 26 persons taking part carrying the 26 flags for a period of five hours.[17]

Nada Prlja: *Advanced Science of Morphology* (Marble Arch, London, 2006)

Nada Prlja: *Advanced Science of Morphology* (*Zagreb Walk*) (Zagreb, 2007)

Flaka Haliti: *My Balls!* (2007), Illegal action at the Kosovo Art Gallery. Stacion Center for Contemporary Art, Prishtina (*2008 Balls! Balls! Balls!*, video documentation, 2008)

As the curator Albert Heta wrote, during the opening of the Muslim Mulliqi Award, conceived by the curator Susana Kuka from Tirana, Albania, Flaka Haliti (born in Prishtina, Kosovo in 1982) made the first illegal intervention in the "white box" of the Kosovo art scene. Her action was: entering the gallery space during the official opening, placing in the corner of the gallery space of a pair of livestock balls,

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[14] This was also the first animal rights group in Croatia, so I am emphasising in the same way its actions and performances that draw attention to the ruling speciesism. Unlike their actions and performances in attracting attention (that is, in the domain of activism), the multimedia artist, experimenter and philosopher, Ivan Ladislav Galeta, warns in his own words with his permaculture art project that at the moment when bees disappear, so will civilisation disappear, and at the moment when Humankind disappears, there will be heaven on Earth.
[15] Lela Vujanić: "Kljuckanje po površini." (http://www.h-alter.org/vijesti/kultura/kljuckanje-po-povrsini/print:true).
[16] Nada Prlja was born in Sarajevo, in Bosnia and Hercegovina (1971), moving to Macedonia in 1981, and since 1998 has been living and working in London.
[17] Cf. Nada Prlja: http://www.seriousinterests.co.uk/

decorated as a present, and then walking out from the gallery space. The artist described it in these words: "The work came as an answer to occasional debates and conversations, a few months earlier, with representatives of the contemporary art scene in Kosovo. There I was told – and "accused" – that the reason for our not having internationally-known women artists from Kosovo was supposedly a result of women lacking the balls to become successful artists."[18]

Flaka Haliti: *My Balls!* (2007), contributed by the artist
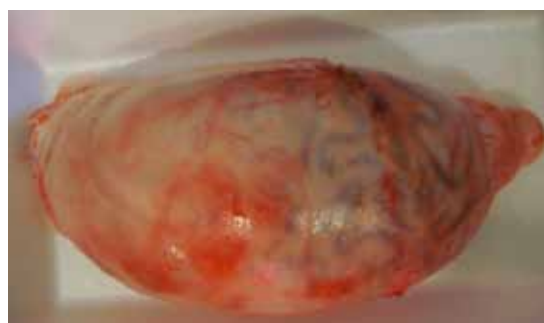
Flaka Haliti: *My Balls!* (2007), contributed by the artist

The Montenegrin Alternative Culture Society: the *Montenegrin Funeral/Exhibition*: 31 August 2011 (Perjanički Dom Culture Centre, Kruševac)

We can link the performance Montenegrin Funeral/Exhibition by the Montenegrin Alternative Culture Society (founded at the end of 2010) with the above-mentioned illegal action by Flaka Haliti. She took as her theme the invisibility of female artists on the Kosovo art scene, while the Montenegrin Alternative Culture Society mentioned on its website that it was striving towards the emancipation and liberalisation of Montenegrin society through the deconstruction of its patriarchate culture. One of the rituals of the patriarchate singled out by the Society was the ritual nature of burials, where one could excuse oneself for non-attendance at a wedding but not at a funeral. In cases of death, women wear mourning for months and even years, for someone from the family with whom they had not been particularly close, but even in some cases when they did not even know the deceased. Furthermore, the Society stresses that the performance in question deals with the similarity between funeral rituals and the "rituals" at the openings of visual art exhibitions, where the object of gossip is often precisely the person being honoured. [19]

The protest-performance of Enver Hadžiomerspahić, the founder and director of the Ars Aevi Sarajevo Project, autumn 2011

The Ars Aevi Project denotes the idea of founding a Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo, which was planned to be built between 2011 and 2014. At the moment, the Ars Aevi collection is stored at the Ars Aevi Art Depot at the Skenderija Centre. Namely, in the autumn of 2011 the author of the Ars Aevi Project, Enver Hadžiomerspahić, after waiting for years for the permit to build the Museum of Contemporary Art, organised a three-week public protest/performance against the cynicism of the ruling officialdom towards the idea of the Museum of Contemporary Art that had been born some twenty years earlier (in 1993, to be exact). So as part of the support to Enver Hadžiomerspahić's protest and performance, the conceptual artist Jusuf Hadžifejzović stated the following: "I don't think that any city that represents a country is without its museum of contemporary art." [20]

On the first day of the first week of the protest, under the title First Experience, Enver Hadžiomerspahić had his first encounter with people in the street, begging them for money and asking them to the sounds of a flute to show solidarity with the future of the Ars Aevi Project. The public was to perform the symbolic act of throwing coins into a chest called *The Game of Life*.[21] This was the longest

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[18]   Cf. Flaka Haliti: "Me, You and Everyone We Know." [In conversation with Nikoleta Marković, Ana Vilenica and Tanja Marković]. Uzbuna. Conversations on New Feminism and Art, Issue 1, (http://www.uzbuna.org/en/journal/conversations-new-feminisam-and-art/me-you-and-everyone-we-know).
        Apart from mentioning the intervention itself the following is also shown on the art webpage (http://www.cee-art.com/kosovo/haliti-flaka.html): "2008 Balls! Balls! Balls! – curated by Albert Heta, Stacion Center for Contemporary Art Prishtina."
[19]   More on this performance: cf. http://www.nvucak.com/dekonstrukcija-kulture-patrijarhata/
[20]   Cf. "Ars Aevi Protest" (http://zomobo.net/ars-aevi-protest).
[21]   Cf. "Protest – Performans Envera Hadžiomerspahića." (http://www.infobar.ba/k/b/fo/2011/Protest_cetvrti_i_peti_dan.php).

performance-protest ever to take place in these regions, since Enver Hadžiomerspahić's protest-performance survived on the streets of Sarajevo for three weeks.

I am concluding this textual retrospective on the title theme with a short statement from Enver Hadžiomerspahić, which testifies sufficiently to the state of matters "on the edge of reason" (to use Krleža's phrase) in which this Balkan planetarium (Krleža's metaphor again) still finds itself: "In the coming two months, in September and October 2012, all questions will be settled about the relationship of the individuals holding jurisdiction and the bodies of the City of Sarajevo and the Sarajevo Canon towards the plans for implementing the final phase of the Ars Aevi Project in the triennial period between 2012 and 2014. It will symbolically and practically stamp two decades since the siege of Sarajevo (2012), twenty years of development of the Ars Aevi Project (2013) and 100 years since the beginning of World War I (2014)." (Quoted from Enver Hadžiomerspahić's e-mail).

Enver Hadžiomerspahić's protest-performance, autumn 2011, Sarajevo

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Contextual Art in the Countries of Eastern Europe: Approaches, diagnoses and treatments of the problems

In this text we address the phenomenon of contextual art in the countries of Eastern Europe today and its possible predecessors in the socially engaged art of socialist realism. By pursuing the contextual approach to art in Eastern Europe, we confront it with the colonial concept of contextual art, as conceived by Paul Ardenne in the West. From György Lukács' notion of "reflection", via the transitional and post-transitional socially engaged art of the 1990s, our focus is the present situation and assessment of the artistic action as intervention in the social context. Though our topic is the contextual art in Eastern Europe, the emphasis is on the perspective of Serbia and the region of former Yugoslavia, with corresponding examples from artistic practice cited in the footnotes. The artistic tradition of modern European (Western) societies, from the 18th century onwards, was based on an intuitivist approach, derived from romanticist and expressionist theories of genius, accounting for art as self-expression of a gifted individual's exceptionality. The foundations of such conception of art were addressed by Giorgio Agamben, who wrote that since the 18th, and especially throughout the 19th century, the philosophical notion of *praxis* transformed[22]. *Praxis* came to be conceived as "expression of the will" of an individual, and art itself was increasingly being defined as practice, and less as *poiesis*. Such an approach is characteristic for the modern, developed and democratic societies. They are determined by the ideology of individualism and attitudes towards the relative autonomy of art, whose

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[22]   Giorgio Agamben, The Man Without Content, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1999, notably the essays: "Poiesis and Praxis", in Ibid, pp. 68-94, and "Privation Is Like a Face", in Ibid, pp. 59-68.

social function may include a total absence of a social function. Auto-expression or reflection of the will of the gifted individual becomes *per se* a sufficient reason for his actions, namely: it may be the sole purpose of his creative output.

In the later half of the 20th century, after World War Two, Europe was divided into the (capitalist) West and (communist/socialist) East, which contributed to further divergences in the theoretical development of such an approach to (and understanding of) art. The capitalist countries pursued this ideological-theoretical pattern. Capitalism manipulates art while conceiving its discursive realms, setting the price for an artwork. The author's genius is observed as a market value. It is, therefore, sufficient to be recognized as a gifted individual; as a genius whose talent translates into specific units that may be expressed in numeric, that is, monetary terms – as an equivalent of all other values.

It would be erroneous to approach the artistic tradition of Western Europe as a binary opposite to the values of art of the European East. Their "base" is common; the "superstructure" differs, due to differing social orders and social-political contexts wherein, in the later half of the 20th century, authors from the socialist and communist countries conceived their work.

Individualism / collectivism

The Western ideology of individualism confronts collectivism as the key notion associated with the societies shaped by socialist ideology. In socialism, a gifted individual operates within a context prone to interpretations of his work through the discourse of "social totality", while the ideal of "socially beneficial" art becomes a specific criterion for assessing the importance of an artwork. An instance of this is György Lukács' "theory of reflection", repeatedly emphasizing the category of *typicality*[23]. According to Lukács, typicality is the sum total of the dominant phenomena and relations in the particular time, representing as such an important feature of art meant to reflect an objective reality. Lukács confronts such art with that which renders images of individual experience of reality in individual's consciousness. In broader terms, in socialist countries, the mission of art was to reflect the society through projections of its future (and past)[24]. In such contexts, an artist was being recognized as gifted if his work had a powerful social resonance; if it emancipated or educated the masses; if it communicated a relevant and straightforward message (instruction) of an ideological nature.

Against this social and conceptual background, the artists from the Eastern European countries developed a strong sense for structural thought, as opposed to intuitive and individualistic one – and thus, at the same time, a sense for social engagement of art. Structural thought implied a re-examining of the position of art and artists in the society, bringing about socially engaged art in the time of soc-realist affirmation of the new social order and, in excess, a problematic and critical art emerging (e.g.) with the new artistic practices in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in the 1970s. Soc-realism was not the only form of artistic practice in the Cold War in Eastern Europe. For example, another major paradigm was the moderate modernism in SFRY, largely converging with the Western art. However, this is not our present concern.

With the cessation of the Cold War and relieving of the divide of Europe resulting in the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the 1990s there were some radical turns in the countries of the former Eastern block. In a transition from the socialist and communist into capitalist social orders, the dominant ideologies in those countries changed. However, a critical-contextual approach and reflection remains an important feature of contemporary art in the countries of the former Eastern block. The engaged art of the 1990s in Eastern Europe was marked by the campaigns for civic freedoms, human rights and positive values of democracy, and in the case of Serbia, additionally and critically charged against the nationalist regime[25]. However, in the present decade, instead of projections of a democratic future, we are facing the cruel actuality of the transition – the demise of the communist ideology of collectivism, the privatization of public assets, the "primary" accumulation of capital, mass unemployment etc. – and the critical blade of artistic practices turns to those and similar issues.

What is characteristic for the contextual approach is that the artist's motivation does not progress from within towards the outside. It commences outside, grows in the subject's consciousness, from where it again goes out, into the street, into the society, into the reality it came from. The artist's intention is not

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23   Đerđ Lukač, Estetičke ideje: za marksističku estetiku, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1979.
24   Note, for example, the large soc-realist canvases by the painter Boža Ilić, or the Yugoslav Partisan Cinema of the 1950s or 1970s.
25   In Eastern Europe in the 1990s, and notably in the countries of former Yugoslavia, the artists were additionally encouraged to take such an approach by the Soros centres for contemporary art as the main commissioner, and in the case of Serbia, the sole infrastructure for production and "distribution" of contemporary art.

to express and reveal his individual, inner state to society – even one directly caused by the surrounding reality; his aim is to affect the society by pinpointing a common social issue[26].

Artist as engineer

This could be a problem concerning the artist personally, but not a problem concerning him solely. In other words, the artist is not perceived as an individual whose inner, "intimate landscapes" are worth exposing as such, but as an individual advocating a certain social stance, speaking on its behalf, or claiming its voice. Similarly to Lukács' theory of reflection, the object of contextual art is currently not the personal, but the typical. Individual reflection may function only as an addendum in a computing operation whose sum total is an expression of the common. The common-social, namely: collective. The artist is the intervening social subject and the purpose of his creation is not to express himself (his inner depths) but to "change the world", to affect the value, ideological and other dominant systems that he recognizes in his creative environment, namely: in the context in which he intervenes.

The artist is not a lonesome figure, but an aware and conscious individual who discovers a background for his actions in the social reality. In this context, the artist is not a genius. He is rather an "engineer" and his task is to suggest correct guidelines for construction of a collective future. Art has no autonomy. Artists have no autonomy. Art is a social practice, and artists social subjects.

Such a conception of contextual art is essentially different from the one advocated by Paul Ardenne[27]. Writing on contextual art from a position of a Western-European theorist, Ardenne defines the notion of reality as an "assortment of events the artist may borrow from" and, subsequently, as a "playground for exploration claimed by the contextual artist". In the countries of the former Eastern block, reality is not a playground claimed by the artist, but the only available ground for setting the rules of his game, the only ground of his very existence. If under the socialist regime the rules of the game were known in advance and determined by the dominant ideology, today they are confusing, new and unclear: the role of the artist is to clarify them or try to redefine and adapt them to the needs of the society forced to play on that ground[28].

Ardenne terms contextual art *the art of the found world*, whereas the countries of the former Eastern block still search for their own "world": the world that had been lost; the world whose reflection was meant to be the future projected by the art of soc-realism – namely, the world whose future never came true.

Therefore, in those countries, contextual art should be observed notably as an "intra-social practice". The contextual artist acts in the society on its behalf, transgressing the border between himself and his audience. What determines his position as an artist is awareness of the social context, namely: his social consciousness. However, it is important to make a distinction between the notion of social consciousness in the art of soc-realism, and the same notion in the discourse of contemporary contextual art in the countries of the former Eastern block. Soc-realist art was commissioned by the state and may, accordingly, be observed in terms of "ideological state apparatuses", as defined by Louis Althusser[29]. Contrary to this "programmatic" contextual collectivism, contemporary art complies to the so-called bottom-up or grass-roots principles, in response to the systems of the state pursuing the neo-liberal capitalist order and re-affirmation of individualism resulting in imposed principles of competition at all social instances. In the past, social consciousness of the artist was perceived as a value advocated by the dominant ideology and ruling social order, with a view to their affirmation. Today, this notion is associated with a critical approach, characteristic for the so-called independent, alternative scenes, whose role is, to the contrary, to question the social order[30].

Consequently, the critical-contextual approach may be observed as an important characteristic of

[26]   We find examples for such an approach in: Tanja Ostojić's project "Looking for a husband with an EU passport", Vladimir Nikolić's "Rhythm", Dušan Murić's "I'm pro: spam", Igor Štromajer and Davide Grassi's "Problemarket"; in design actions by the Škart group etc.

[27]   Pol Arden, Kontekstualna umetnost: umetničko stvaranje u urbanoj sredini, u situaciji, intervencija, učestvovanje, IK Kiša-Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, Novi Sad, 2007, pp. 38-42. (Paul Ardenne, Un Art contextuel: Création artistique en milieu urbain, en situation, d'intervention, de participation, Flammarion, 2002)

[28]   Instances of redefinition and reclaiming the public space: TkH Platform's TV performance "SMS Guerilla", the projects "Lilly" and "Tempo" by Danilo Prnjat, "Raspeani Skopjani", Horkeškart's early performances, Ana Miljanić's production "Listen, Little Man" as part of the project Lust for Life (CZKD) etc.

[29]   Luj Altiser, Za Marksa (For Marx), Nolit, Belgrade, 1971; Luj Altiser, Elementi samokritike (Elements of Self-Criticism), BIGZ, Belgrade, 1975; see also Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in Mapping Ideology, Slavoj Žižek (ed.), Verso, London-New York, 1995, pp. 100-141.

[30]   Instances of bottom-up initiatives include Belgrade's "Other Scene", Zagreb-based "Operacija: grad" (Operation: City) and "Pravo na grad" (Right to a City), Nikolina Pristaš and Ivana Ivković's performance "Protest" etc.

the contemporary artistic thought in the Eastern European countries, where the notion of social consciousness, in a way, historically evolved. In the years of transition it had transformed, nevertheless retaining its basic postulates of the approach to art and its position in the society. Indeed, those postulates changed direction: the ethical dimension, sense of collectivism and notion of art as an instrument of social progress remain, with the difference that they no longer represent the dominant regime, but criticize it. Political and social changes affecting the Eastern European societies brought about changes of the dominant value systems. Thus, the prevailing ideological and aesthetic patterns of Leftist provenance changed sides in the times of rising capitalism, becoming alternative.

Therefore, on one level, we may address the contemporary contextual art of Eastern Europe in terms of a search for new forms of collectivism or new aspects of pursuing social justice. For a contextual artist, society is not merely a space for artistic intervention: it is also a cause for the inner state demanding an intervention. Context is, consequently, a cause for action and playground of action. "Personal is political" and *vice versa*.

In such an order the artwork assumes a (social, political) mission, claiming an active contextual impact. Such approach demands a strong sense of the context and structural reflection. It commences with perceiving the problems or deficiencies within the existing context, raising questions in turn on what to do and how to react in order to transform it[31].

Artivism

To set straight the deficiencies of a context, it is necessary to challenge its basic postulates and (tacit) consensuses. In that sense, a critical-contextual approach always implies a particular "dissensus", allowing for a sharp critique of the context. Critique is, nevertheless, the start but not the end point of conceiving a contextual-intervening artistic act, as the very need for intervention indicates a desire, necessity, demand of a new context, or even a clear vision of a different one. This vision needs not necessarily be a vision of the better, but it always starts from the need for change. It is, therefore, a vision of the different. The artist as an intervening social subject is not obliged to know exactly what kind of a change he wants, as many artworks based on such principles demonstrate to us. His desire to change the context might not be an illustration of a program, manifesto or a political proclamation of a new society, for in the complex contemporary social realm (no longer informed as a whole, as would be previously effected by the master narrative of the communist ideology) there is a consciousness on the part of the artist that he cannot precisely anticipate the consequences of his intervention. The critical-contextual approach to art may accordingly remain in the frameworks of clear dissent, of statements on what one doesn't want; of attempts to suspend laws, even temporarily, in order to test new ones.

Sharp critique of the dominant regime is a starting point for contextual art. It builds upon it, as long as this attitude does not become an end in itself. At this point we reach the main problem associated with this artistic approach.

It may easily become – and often does – a cynical, pessimist and unproductive phenomenon of "parasitism on the negative"[32] rendering the intervening subject passive. He identifies with detachment from the context, perverse pleasures of constant negations, and exclusivity of his position of being stateless.

The opposite of this position is the one assumed by *artivism*. The artivist approach is active and affirmative. It starts from dissent and critique of the existing, and focuses on the change bound to happen, conceiving the artistic act as a tool for attaining a goal. The goal is the change, here and now[33].

We may conclude that a pronounced critique of the context, followed by a detailed analysis of its mechanisms, relations of power and their effects, underlies each critical-contextual artistic action. It begins with diagnosing a particular social problem however – in medical terms – we might add that a correct diagnosis does not necessarily imply the right therapy and the ultimate cure. Diagnosing is important, but not sufficient. Namely: a clear articulation of a problem is merely the starting point in the process of its solving. The problem and its correct definition operate as topics, but not as concepts for an interventionist artistic act. The problem is the trigger, but not the target.

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[31]   Examples of "systematic" interventions into the cultural-artistic context: Marina Gržinić's theoretical and artistic work, actions and projects launched by the TkH Platform and TkH Magazine, Prelom magazine and collective, the project and the gallery Kontekst, Per.art and "Indigo Dance Projekat" by Saša Asentić (and Ana Vujanović).

[32]   Bojana Cvejić's notion may be observed as a definition of one of the problems of our local context, and in turn as a launching pad for a critical-contextual artistic intervention into that context.

[33]   Some artivist groups include: Žene na delu (Women at Work), Queer Beograd, Stani pani kolektiv, Zluradi paradi, E8 group etc.

Therefore, in art conceived with a critical-contextual approach, one should distinguish the works disclosing the problem in its context[34] from those displaying intention to actively affect the context. This difference equals a difference between representation (implying that the purpose of a particular artistic act is to render a certain problem visible), and investment (fr. *l'enjeu*) in the sense outlined by Althusser[35]. According to Althusser, the intervening subject – observed from the perspective of post-humanist theories, beginning with structuralism, and especially in the context of the poststructuralist materialist theory (therefore as a product and effect of different texts and their intersections) – cannot objectively grasp the totality of a society. Nevertheless, he can invest himself into it, thus subjecting himself to critique and self-critique which activates the process of change, directs it, but demands responsibility of the subject to the change.

The artist must be "aware"; his social position is a position of a subject aware of the complexity of the situation in the society.

Conscience and awareness additionally demand responsibility, and the notion of responsibility indeed implies an ethical dimension. Consequently, a question is raised: do only those affected by a problem have the right to concern themselves with it? Instead of answering this question, we may cite examples from the practice of the numerous artists who performed their interventions in contexts in which they never belonged. This especially applies to various artistic practices concerned with marginal groups and identities[36]. Although the ethical dimension of these works may be debatable, the artist's right to intervene in any context is taken for granted – keeping in mind the premise that context is *public property.*

The context never belongs to an individual, regardless of the level of his identification with it (whether he feels a victim or an accomplice). His comfortable unchallenging of his own position does not necessarily imply obedience: however, it has the same effects as tacit acceptance of the existing order in a certain context.

Thus the critical-contextual, interventionist art approaches the notion of solidarity and suggests a conclusion that the context is ever changing, not because of a single person, but because of us all. Each artistic contextual intervention multiplies social confrontations, opening new possibilities for plurality. This plurality is not smooth and unchallenging (as the postmodernist "anything goes"); it raises the criteria, questions the dominant values, and creates a social climate providing a discursive space for a multitude of often dissonant voices.

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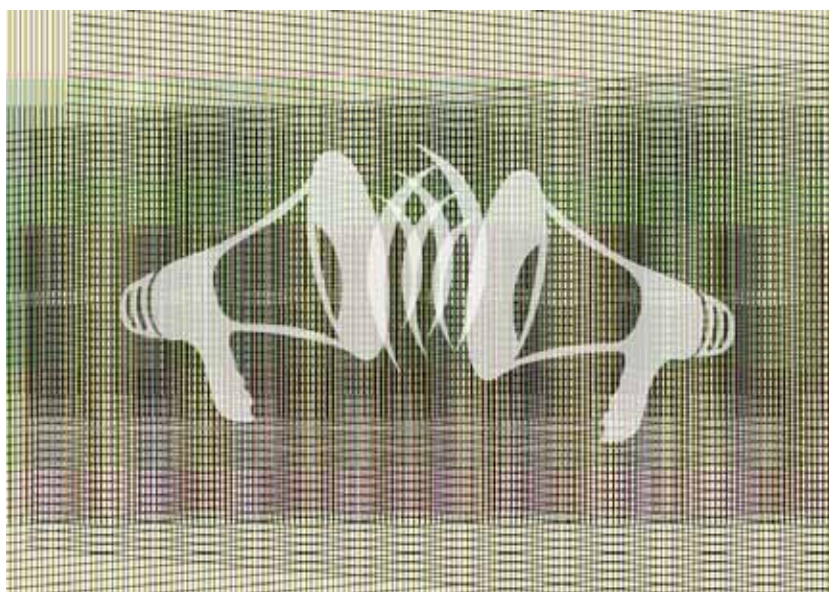
[34]   This approach features in the works by Vladan Jeremić; "Gypsies and Dogs" by Zoran Todorović; slam performances by the Drama Mental Studio (Jelena and Milena Bogavac); The Monument Group; project "Janez Janša"; Ana Miljanić's production "Bordel ratnika" based on the anthropological study by Ivan Čolović etc.
[35]   Luj Altiser, op.cit. 1971; Luj Altiser, op.cit. 1975.
[36]   E.g. the artworks and actions aiming at integration of marginalized social groups, like the ethnic, religious, sexual or other minorities: the poor, parentless children, victims of violence, medical patients or persons with special needs. Such artistic practices feature in the so-called inclusive theatre, forum theatre and the works conceived in workshops and adult education trainings. This group additionally includes all the practices which may be labeled as community art, and the works thematizing the position of marginal groups and identities, rendering their problems visible for the rest of the society. The examples also comprise numerous documentary films and videos whose content explicitly addresses the socially marginal.

INTER-VIEW WITH BILJANA STANKOVIĆ LORI

BY VANJA NIKOLIĆ

INVITING WOMEN TO REBEL

Biljana Stanković Lori was born in Novi Sad in 1974. She studied Discourse Analysis in the department of Serbian Language and Literature, graduating in 1999, in the same year finishing her alternative study of 'Mileva Marić Einstein' with her dissertation on the Feminist Theatre, 'FENS teater'. The combination of activism and art in Biljana's work has resulted in the creation and establishment of another feminist, this time also lesbian, theatre group, ACT Women. Concerned with knowledge, needs and the existence of marginalised groups, Biljana Stanković does not need a different truth for the creation of her performances. Research into the body, voice, movement and rhythm within the lesbian identity has led Biljana to also become a theatre educator (with the workshop, *The Rhythm in Us)*. She currently works as coordinator of the Novi Sad Lesbian Organisation, NLO.

November 25 is approaching – the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Between that and the 10th of December will be 16 days of activism against violence to women, including different types of action, but primarily a performance, which will be taken to various towns in Serbia. What is is like working on the preparation of this performance?

Biljana Stanković: Performances for the 16 days of activism began in 2002. From the first year, until the eighth, I was heavily involved in them, but for the last two years, I have been less involved, although I have been working with them. This year we will celebrate our tenth year of performing. Preparations for the performance mainly depend on the theme. Every year we have had a different theme, for example, violence against children, laws, how to respond to institutions, etc. Our preparations depend on that. First, we read about that specific theme, studying the statistics, news articles, feminist work on violence and so on. Then we meet two months before the first performance to agree on roles, who will write the script, what we will focus on. Next we invite production designers, scriptwriters, a director, and everyone else we need. We always have a deadline for the script, as that needs to be finished first. With that the director decides if we will have dance, or masks, or some kind of dolls. While the set is being created, we map out the cities we will go to and work on the performance. We often record background voices, and we invite women who write music to work with us, and so on until the 25th of November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, when performances on the same theme are being held all over the world. We perform in the last city on the 10th of December, which is International Human Rights Day.

Given that the main objectives of these performances are artistic, how are they?

Yes, here, in this emerging artistic work, that isn't in itself the ultimate goal. The goal is to communicate a message, to make the audience commit to something, and commit to themselves, because they will hear the truth, as it is a tool in the performance. They will hear the truth about someone who threatens, and takes away someone's right to life, and then chooses violence as a means to show their power. A lack of awareness of the injustice that violence inflicts on anyone who is a minority, who isn't accepted. The goal is an integrated kind of 'in your face' way of speaking the truth. Not every artistic piece of theatre does that – actually almost none of them do – rather they imitate some realities that barely resemble truth. Because of those artistic freedoms, the artist can do anything, but here in the activist theatre only truth is important, with the most detailed reflection of the society in which we live. It's true that there are people who don't feel any responsibility when they encounter a violent situation. They simply ignore it. They don't want to get involved. The art itself creates these experiential tears that we cry because we are working with victims of violence. Everyone knows best their own domain,

and we know perpetrators of violence, and we visit women in prison who are there because they killed their husbands, but they endured daily, brutal domestic violence, some of them for 35 years. With our feminist politics in the theatre we want women to recognise their own dignity much earlier in their lives.

In view of the sensitivity of the theme, how do you choose the collaborators, who are always professional artists, and how is this kind of activist performance positioned in art?

You know what? I have an answer to that. I'll be honest. And I love that you asked me this. To start with, when we created the first performance, we wanted to include women from activism, at least those who are involved with art. We needed some actors, who were sensitive to the theme, from amateur theatre. We encountered the group from the Krsmanac Academic Theatre, and the five of them joined us, and it was great. Vesna Bujošević was, I think, the only one who did all 10 performances. In the meantime, we started ACT Women, the artistic feminist troupe, or Feminist Travelling Theatre, which was automatically connected to activism and ways of doing it, and the obvious conclusion... Acting or action was the effect that we wanted to have with our shows. And is there a place in the art world for us to express ourselves? I can say that there is, but that it is not visible for a simple reason: the professional art world is more frustrated by the profession and by various struggles that we know nothing about. Our audience is in the street, they are casual passers-by, but in this audience, there are also perpetrators of violence watching us. And there are victims watching us. And those who can help. What is important to us is that at least something in that small space, in that town, changes for the better, and here is the format of our success. I don't know myself what that audience thinks, but topics that only we deal with, as activists, have already been accepted in various cultural institutions, and I think that is one of the successes of our work. We were loud and visible enough that the 'art world' recognised our themes as valid and important. Of course, there is also resistance to our work, but somewhere we are very warmly welcomed.

Coming back to the audience, and the whole society, the system. Are there any changes in the last ten years within the audience, with their acceptance, non-acceptance, reactions? What is the position of the activist performances in our society? What is the reaction of the system?

Look, there were lots of shifts during these last 10 years. All of us, in feminism, are making parallel actions and we are changing society, like the laws, for example, which have changed. The campaign was always very much in the media. After 5 years they were putting the whole performance on TV, and not just short clips from it. The system is always in opposition to anything feminist because of the one simple reason that feminists are changing the world, and the system is afraid of change, and that is the only barrier. Everything depends on which city you're in. Down in Serbia nothing is actively happening, and the performance is like a new TV channel. More women are approaching us after the performance, asking for the nearest emergency telephone number or help, where to go, and now there is more of them because we are leaving flyers too, so some of them first call Belgrade and we refer them to their local groups. Activist performance, in our society, is not easily accepted because of politics which opposite to those of 80% from the national consciousness of the country. But, when you find a way, when you present a well thought-out performance, when you invite women to rebel, that is the thing which is changing the world and that is what gives them hope, and that is enough. I think that working with us is an important experience for the directors, whether they are studying or have already worked as directors. The system easily prohibits publication in the media if the work contains to much information about, for example, the work of the police. But, on the other hand, they can't turn down the offer of education from feminists.

Given all the circumstances, are there any limits that you set for yourselves? Is setting limits acceptable at all?

Yes, the limits are arguable here, because the energy of destroying social taboos has helped and guided us. So the limits are very elusive, in the search for any place in which violence can be condemned. We set boundaries on the basis of politics, and some of our theatre work is more connected to the work of theatre laboratories, community theatre, and so on. We deal with the concept of identity throughout all of the themes, and that annoys people. We may be irritating, with our insistence on justice, truth, the

respect of human rights, such that our art is just a tool for breaking up one more system, which we can resist and which we can change. We can say that we will never deal with war heroes, that is one of our policies. One of...

I am interested in connecting, in some way, the performance of Pussy Riot, which definitely had broad impact on the global community, but also had disastrous consequences. Do you aspire to that kind of political performance? Could that happen in Serbia?

Everything is possible in Serbia. I really do not know would it be the same way. I think that the breaking point would be the same. I think that we could perform with the same tension, but I do not think that would be possible to experience the same level of explicitness.

For us, here, it is like in Stalin's time, but we are really not in Russia. The provocation is that artistic moment which is connected to activism. The provocation is the thing which pulls you outside your boundaries, and it is understandable and logical that is possible to have an explosion. Now, there is the only one question: If the regime gets worse for feminist and anti-military groups, will the activist theatre give its life for the survival of art, while still fighting for women's rights, if it reacts to its own riskiest and most extreme actions against the system, if it listens to the mantra "kill culture". In the cultural domain, the activist approach is still welcome, but in vain, when everyone has already existentially blown off part of the system, politically. Zap, bang, boom. But we will survive, I hope and I am happy for every action.

TIME DESIGN

BY IVAN PRAVDIĆ

PRATICUM FOR LIVE AND MEDIA DRAMATURGY

What are the tools that we can use to direct the flow of time and its perception and recognition in any kind of live or media event? In live dance/performance, electronic/transmitted arts as well as intertwined in our eyes, ears, nostrils, tongues, skin, brains, guts, hearts...

Therefore, let's start by exploring the terminology in order to be able to use it.

Art:

One of the ritual systems, transmitting and provoking meanings in the broadest sense – emotions, cognition, intuitions and information.Supposedly the most successful.

In contemporary society, art has become a playground for experimenting with spectacle and communication technologies. Later, these achievements were applied to commercial projects. Actually, anything can be art. I have proposed a quite idealistic definition, which could be false. This is why we will try to use the word Art, in this sense, as rarely as possible.

Dance:

Activity of the body (in space and time) that tends to be Performance Art.

Ritual:

A means to a change of consciousness – fascinating, numerical or neurotic.

The fact that ritual changes the consciousness differentiates it from consumption. In the ritual, one takes part, but in consumption, one is an object.

A fascinating ritual is a powerful overflow of lights, noise and human mass. One who participates in a fascinating ritual loses the ability to make decisions by one's own will. Fascinating rituals are all mass spectacles – sports events, concerts, demonstrations, raves...

A numerical ritual is commonly found in religious techniques: repetition of prayers and mantras, rhythmicising consciousness by accumulating harmonic energy. Mathematically, this can be represented by the numerical series: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14...

A neurotic ritual is a derivation from numerical rituals, when consciousness cannot take repetition any more, due to excitement or boredom, and thus these series are disturbed: 1,2,100,586,-12,7484,88528,5,9,-8... Dramaturgy occurs among these narrative jumps.

Performance Art:

A specified group of artworks which show consciousness of leading the audience/participant through the process of change. Communal time of performers and audience.

Dramaturgy and audience again. So, it's the Art. As if it could not be done without it.

Space:

Multidimensional emptiness in infinity - vectored by the infinite time. Infinity consists of an infinite number of points, yet each of these points is a new Infinity with an infinite number of different points, ie. Infinities... In the Infinite, each point is the centre for a marked moment. Yes, space (continuum) is finite – dimensional and empty, and matter is dimensional and not empty.

Time:

Force of process, transformation, ie. Continuity... on local, internal and absolute level and in both directions – from the future towards the past, as well as from the past towards the future.

Internal time is the subject's temporal code of perception, action, contemplation and emotion. Local time is the field-operator where the subject exists and can be different from internal time. This difference is crucial for performance arts, because it defines the conflict between the characters/persons and the environment, provoking drama. Different internal time flows wanting to proclaim themselves local time flow are also the source of drama. Absolute time is cosmic logos, the matrix followed by all events in the Universe. It could be a resultant force of all forces in the Infinite; if it were null, time would not exist.

Two time directions are just two positions of observation, because events, ie. local time, travel from the future towards the past, while internal, perceived time, flows from the past towards the future.

Design:

Arranging/choreographing/composing/putting into order space and/or time with the aim of a more harmonious transfer of meanings.

The first usage of the word 'Harmonia' was in the Iliad by Homer, describing wooden joists harmonically put together in construction of the Achean ships. Accents and relaxants and their balancing, that is design.

Time design:

Matrices. i.e. the harmonics of creation and the perception of artwork.

Only artwork? Any work!

Rhythm:

The pressure of time.

This definition by Kazimir Maljevich tells us two crucial pieces of information:

1 – motifs, ie. Signs that press the perceiving consciousness

2 – if the pressure is condensed, there is more input (perceptive seconds) in less local time, and we feel that time runs faster than on the clock; or, if there is less input in local time, the impression of time is delayed, and we feel it has passed slower, ie. internal time is delayed.

Motif:

Any content, sign or impulse – a colour, a line, a sound, a word, a movement... to more complex signifying units – composition, situation, character, narrative...

Yes, any distinctive category, any sign! In visual artwork it can be a single colour, by appearing in different places it creates its time flow in very simple way – from bigger masses towards smaller ones. The appearance of a character in drama, as well as colour (of light or a costume), a single phrase, even a word or a single differentiated consonant in literary work – these are all motifs.

Motif's second:

The duration between the anticipation and retro-action of a single motif. Richard Wagner uses the terms presentiment and recollection. He also groups motifs, thus emotionally conditioning us in a way that one motif from a group can anticipate a whole group or other related motifs.

In the Karamazov Brothers by Dostoyevsky, the anticipation of the motif of father murder is repeated several times in the same manner, and this prolongs the motif's second (not resolving the anticipation) over many hundreds of pages. We are so eager to get to the retro-action of this motif that during that single motif's second, we spend a lot of intense time and do not feel bored. Using a motif just once makes the motif's second last and stay open in our consciousness. The search for the retro-action outside of an artwork's duration can prolong it, maybe, to Infinity.

Distance:

Time potency created by the difference between a motif's anticipation and retro-action.

This tension between a sign's appearance and its resolution, between different contexts, energies and the qualities they show themselves in, gives us a story and shows transformation. Aristotle creates the difference between tragedy and comedy just by using distance: the transgression of characters from a state of unhappiness to a state of happiness (comedy), and from happiness to misery (tragedy). Distances are everywhere, but the most important are the ones from the beginning to the end of a performance/drama/theater/show/movie, showing the destiny of each character and the processes inside every scene. And what makes a scene distinctive? The answers to three questions: What new thing has happened in the story? What new thing has happened to the characters? What new thing has happened with the audience?

Body:

The moment of relations in space – a definition from Delfim Sardo. The Body is not just a human or organic corporeality, but every work, action, energetic and material/perceptional existence.

Work/Action/Body has three dimensions:

1 – the inner dimension, marked with excitement, tensions, vibrations inside the body – semantic dimension

2 – the Kine-sphere, the visible body, with its movements, expanded by visible costumes and active stage design – a syntactic dimension of receipted reality, pure textuality

3 – the projections of the body, the energy flowing from the limbs in ballet – a pragmatic dimension made of all possible associations an artwork can provoke in audience

The corporeal/organic body is defined by four codes:

1 – the code of shapes, looks, visibility – dance is, in occidental cultures, the technology of making forms with the body

2 – the code of pain and pleasure that gives borders to the body, its extensions and contractions

3 – the code of information – from DNA through ballet as a notation system to bio-mechanics, all try to map out the body, to give it a language of intent But it is more complicated to create from these languages than just to use them for description

4 – the code of body's behaviour, its uncontrollable and unintentional use (in everyday life?)

Image:

Completeness, recognizability, truth... the level of a motif's articulation that is independent from the subject. In visual arts it is called iconic or realistic, in performing arts it is represented by a recognizable and everyday situation. Image makes time flow faster in our perception, ie. internal time contracts.

How does image occur? First, by imagining, then by kinetic feeling, than by diffusion with the imagined (these are all also stages of meditation). I'll use the example of creating images in Butoh dance: you walk through the fog – you are in a situation (subject and object), you are touching the fog – making a relation with the situation (subject works with object), fog penetrates your body – the situation is interactive (object acts on subject), you have become fog - identification (subject is object), you are fog and you float between mountains – narration (creation), wind or sun scatters the fog – story twist (dramaturgy).

In neo-Stanislavski theater, actors try to work in a mid mode of playing on stage. That is, literary, the life of a person on stage. Actors are not allowed to act, but try to live like everyday people. This eases time perception for the audience (image) and enables the speaking of lots of text, and so is common in dramas by Chekhov and many realists. Every stylization or just a slight raising of voice, creates drastic accent, a sudden slowing of the time flow.

Expression:

The level of a motif's articulation that is dependent on the subject, and thus provokes stylization. Expression slows time passing in the perceptor. Internal time is delayed, due to the simple reason that it takes more time to decode unrecognisable signs.

Direct expressions of tensions or just letting signs happen by chance (either subconscious or technological) is roaming inside one of the body's dimensions. It just expresses an inner tremble, just a showing of the form of the body, or just pointing to a possible, yet actually absent, meaning/action. This is the opposite to the image - while imagining, the painter sees the picture as a whole, the composer hears the music, the dancer/performer is aware both of its spontaneity (being surprised) and choreography (making decisions about the next movement).

Whether it is a machine or a conceptual improv game, if there is no imagining, but rather things are just allowed to happen, it prolongs the time perception while we unriddle what is going on and what should be going on. The movie Amadeus by Milos Forman lasts three and a half hours, yet it passes as if it is only an hour and a half. There is not a single camera angle wider than 30 degrees, there are no drastic up or down cadres, scenes always go from the wider plain to close up, everything is so simply put that we immediately understand what is in the frame and never spend a second prolonging internal time with questions or uncertainty. In Dario Argento's films, especially in Deep Red, there are shots where each plain is in a different colour. It takes us a few seconds just to recognize the picture.

Art (again):

Art – no, that is just a word... Creative time design is balancing these two, because image is everyday reality, even habit and expression is formalism, robotization, resistance to life flow.

H.T. Lehmann proposes the thesis that when criticism, theory, entertainment, propaganda... end, art starts. This can be broadened to the dialectics that art starts when our notion of art ends. This possible definition could not match the logical criteria for defining – but logical language is just one of the languages that art uses. Yet, this dialectics can explain both the subjectivity and universality of art and the strange process by which each new artwork expands the domain of art – in both a subversive and cumulative way.

Digital:

Points precisely marking simultaneous motifs' values.

It is denoted moment. Parameterised values, cuts, opening of choices, possible reproduction, decision, quantification... I propose this difference between digital and analog because digital machines need writing/marking and commanding/reproducing of/the values. Scenic spectacle could be more precisely, more complicated and more completely marked this way, than just with dialogues and stage directions:

speech / live act / space / lights / recorded sound / live sound / video / meaning / effect…

All that is written down is digital. And all that happens, unmarked, is analog.

Analog:

Flows when polyvalences of motifs' iridescence without markings.

Time for/of improvisation, empathy, letting it go, taking it in, going with the flow, unrepeatability, acceptance... A computer also has its analog – random function.

Interactivity:

All forms of involving the audience's attention.

An emphatic ride:

In emphatic times it was possible that the appearance of Erinies on stage provoked several spontaneous abortions in the audience. Identification with one of the characters, getting into his/her skin, anxiety and emotional sharing with a fictional character, nowadays is possible only for children. But, it is possible to find plots that can take us in, to project ourselves into the situation. The film 21 Grams" was maybe too painful, so many people reacted with resistance, but Indecent Proposal with Demi Moor, Robert Redford and Woody Harrelson, in this money hungry world, made millions think: would I, for a million bucks...?

Adventure through an imagined world:

We plug in to the decoding parabolas of that world to our own experiences and the world we live in. What is the same? What is different? How would some things from our world function in the fictional one, and vice versa...?

Ostranenie:

Estrangement or Verfremndung of the motif makes us analyse, and think why is something different from what are we used to. This occupation opens an analytical motif's second that makes time run slower, until we believe in some possible answer. Even Brecht uses this more as an effect to accent a single motif, than as a style.

Shock:

Shock is possible only if the audience is prepared for something non-shocking. Relax them, make them laugh, shake their guts and then grab them with the shock. Shock after shock makes people numb, yet starting with a shock is a good way to open a dialogue. If we miss the opportunity of this first "jab" to call them in, people will close themselves.

Feedback games:

Active audience participation, their working, living, and not just observing, life in art, makes the flow of time thicker, faster, for the audience, and creates valuable experience. There are a million ways to include people. Taking polls and using live results as material for the performance, feeding the audience, giving them props, even tasks to make something, draw or play... after breaking the passivity habit, grown-ups will, like children, find the inspiration to create, participate and experience, with immediate reflection or not, depending on the person.

THE PERFOR
MANCE
TEXT

BY ANDRÉ VON AH

"And who cares about genre any more, anyway?"

– Adrian Searle, 3 July 2012, *The Guardian*

With the launch of the film *The Artist Is Present* in July 2012, Marina Abramović's much commented on MoMA performance came back to the media. And so did performance art.

The history of performance art stretches much further than one might think. Scholars such as Miriam Griffin, Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford, point to performative actions in ancient Greece. Such as Diogenes repeatedly acting as a dog ("cynic") in his performances.

In the 16th century poets throughout the Iberian Peninsula and in the newly discovered colonies in the Americas found live art as a new way of presentation of their work. In a cross between visual arts, music and literature, they would draw each paragraph of their poems, hang them in lines in public spaces such as market fairs, public squares and churches' front yards, and sing their poetry to an audience of passers by.

There were also the romantics whom in the 19th Century invaded cemeteries to desecrate corpses and recite their poetry to dead bodies.

It is also impossible not mention Yves Klein *Zone de Sensibilité Picturale et Immatérielle* (Zone of immaterial pictorial sensibility). The selling of empty space, the so-called immaterial zone, which took the form of a check in exchange for gold was in itself perhaps the start of contemporary performance — given that the blurring distinctions between real life and art. The action went further, with the burning of the checks, if the buyers so wished, and the throwing of half the gold in the Seine. This ritual would have the presence of two witnesses, an arts critic and a museum director. The use of ritual in the artists' work was a constant.

Marta Soares is a Brazilian choreographer and dancer who ventures into performance art after extensive research into human subjectivities and rituals. In the performance *Vestígios* (Vestiges) she used the ancient burying rituals of Native Brazilian inhabitants from a pre-colonial time to recreate a field of forces in which the choreographic movement passes through the movement of sand and her own inability to move under 450 KG of it. While the audiences bear testimony to the remains of the fields that were once used by these Peoples to stage their ritual burials on video screens behind her own mountain of sand. The piece was presented in Zagreb, Croatia, in 2012 during the Queer Zagreb Festival and has also found wonderful reception throughout Europe. It is one of the very clear examples of transgressive art, of art that challenges not only its format (dance) but also the audience, which patiently waits for the body of the performer to be uncovered during the performance.

By definition a ritual is a gathering with a common and shared purpose, a sort of contract or common agreement between the audience and the artist. "Ordinary objects or acts acquire symbolic significance through incorporation into a shared belief system." ("But is it art?", Cynthia Freeland, 2001). Many performance artists use this premise as the start of their work. Both by creating from the start the shared belief system, such as Klein, or by utilizing another's to recreate another reality, like Marta Soares with her enormous sand installation as a burial site.

In our times genres are blurred. Performance art itself went through a transformation from what it originally was in the sixties which is often referred to as the golden age of performance art – perhaps simply because it is when it entered into the mainstream picture using media as its ally. It also may be quite peculiar, given the common understanding that performance art cannot be repeated and that its documentation is very questionable. Artists may no more perform acts in galleries for an audience, they may make you feel like an actor in an "immersive installation" something as performative as Klein's burning of checks or arts recreation of burial realities.

But what is performativity? There are many answers, and the interdisciplinarity of it is what makes it so interesting. It could be said that it is the capacity of speech, or a production of a "speaking body" (Felman). It could be said as well that it is other forms of non-verbal communication, in which the

Yves Klein and Dino Buzatti in a ritual by the Seine, in Paris in 1962.

audience actively participates and constructs an identity or shared belief. But, it might not be enough to perform oneself, the audience conditions and channels that perform and gives it meaning.

Performance art as a medium

> "The métier gets practiced, the medium gets questioned: the métier gets transmitted, the medium communicates or gets communicated; the métier gets learnt, the medium gets discovered; the métier is a tradition, the medium is a language; the métier rests on experience, the medium relies on experimentation."
>
> – Thierry de Duve, When Form has become Attitude – And Beyond, 2007

Stating the obvious, it is safe to say that language is a collection of signs. So is performance art. Thierry de Duve, from the University of Lille 3, points out to the failing of arts teaching in contemporary art through the failure of both the tradition and, what he calls, the Bauhaus system: "from Rimbaud to Beuys: everyone is an artist". According to him, practically all art teachers know that talent exists and that only a few of their students will succeed. Why? Isn't creativity that innate capacity of symbolization inherent to all human beings (that specific fantasy of reparation), learned in the infancy and carried on to complex systems through adulthood (Melanie Klein)? Were the Romantic and democratic ideals of egalitarianism irreparably lost in a world of terrific wars and terror?

Performance art itself may offer not only a beacon of hope but be one of the answers to these questions. As a medium itself, as a collection of signs that in themselves speak of symbolic relationships between the artist and his work, his audience and his space, performance art demonstrates that while creativity does play a role talent is that ineffable quality of the relationships of meanings that cannot be touched but that can be felt and most certainly discussed.

When Vlasta Delimar and Milan Božić re-enact Gotovac's perfrmances in London, Paris, Venice and other towns, they remind us that a performance cannot be repeated, even when it is, of the powerful symbolic significance of an homage, and of the actuality and immediacy and novelty of performance art as political.

The medium by definition comes neither from creativity nor talent. Yet the place of origin upon which the performance bases itself is real and concrete, such as Marta Soares' ancient burial sites remains or Klein's checks, gold and spaces – even empty.

23

Immediacy and politics

Vlasta Delimar and Milan Božić's re-enacting of Gotovac's performances highlight also that performance is immediate and its political aspect mutable. It can never be repeated, though it may acquire new meanings. Such as in language when linguistic changes bring forward the coining of new or mutated meanings to old words.

The very strength of performance art lies in its immediacy, and its adaptation and politics. Itself being a very political act of rebellion against all the traditional art forms such visual and performing arts. So was the focus in the body often seen in performance art is an act of rebellion against the traditional mediums of art.

The use of the word "action" to define an act of performance art, as preferred by Joseph Beuys, for example, was chosen to set it apart from the more entertaining forms of art, such as traditional theater.

A fast dictionary to performance art

Action

The term "action" constitutes one of the earliest styles within modern performance art. In part, it serves to distinguish the performance from traditional forms of entertainment, but it also highlights an aspect of the way performers viewed their activities. Some saw their performances as related to the kind of dramatic encounter between painter and painting that critic Harold Rosenberg talked of in his essay 'The American Action Painters' (1952). Others liked the word action for its open-endedness, its suggestion than any kind of activity could constitute a performance. For example, early conceptual actions by Yoko Ono consisted of a set of proposals that the participant could undertake, such as, "draw an imaginary map...go walking on an actual street according to the map..."

Body Art

Body art was central to the performance art of the 1960s, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably in this context. It encompasses artists who position themselves as living sculpture as well as those who use their bodies as a canvas. However, the definition of whether an act is Body art or not is often up to the artist. For example, as a performance artist that uses cosmetic surgery, Orlan is deeply involved in the expression of the body, yet she describes her work as "carnal art": she does not use her body to make art, her body is art.

Happenings

Happenings were a popular mode of performance that arose in the 1960s, and which took place in all kinds of unconventional venues. Heavily influenced by Dada, they required a more active participation from viewers/spectators, and were often characterized by an improvisational attitude. While certain aspects of the performance were generally planned, the transitory and improvisational nature of the event attempted to stimulate a critical consciousness in the viewer and to challenge the notion that art must reside in a static object.

Endurance

A number of prominent performance artists have made endurance an important part of their practice. They may involve themselves in rituals that border on torture or abuse, yet the purpose is less to test what the artist can survive than to explore such issues as human tenacity, determination, and patience. Taiwanese artist Tehching Hsieh has been one important exponent of this approach; Marina Abramovic offers other examples. Allan Kaprow was perhaps the most influential figure in the happenings movement, though others who were involved include Claes Oldenburg, who would later be associated with Pop art.

Ritual

Ritual has often been an important part of some performance artists' work. For example, Marina Abramović has used ritual in much of her work, making her performances seem quasi-religious. This demonstrates that while some aspects of the performance art movement have been aimed at demystifying art, bringing it closer to the realms of everyday life, some elements in the movement have sought to use it as a vehicle for re-mystifying art, returning to it some sense of the sacred that art has lost in modern times.

Manifesto

Manifestos have been helping artists define their own position and ideas, and they have helped us understand a certain aspect of art. There is a whole separate text that should be written about manifestos in art, but one of my favorite quotes from any manifesto comes from the one done by Marina Abramović where she states: "an artist should never be in a relationship with another artist". Well, she is the first one that could say that this rule went out the window for her, obviously. But then again, why I like it so much is because it is such a simple rule – and yet one that is even simpler to brake – putting in place what a manifesto often is – a frozen moment in time, a performance art in itself.

Upcoming & Up and coming in the region

Matija Ferlin
The Other at the Same Time
25th October 2012 at 8pm – premiere, Istrian National Theatre City theatre Pula, Pula, HR
26th October 2012 at 8pm – Istrian National Theatre City theatre Pula, Pula, HR
17th January 2013 at 8pm – Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana, SI
18th January 2013 at 8pm – Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana, SI
The Other At The Same Time is an experimental dance project based on a movement system research that choreographer Matija Ferlin has started in his first group piece called Onformance, for which he received the Croatian Theater Award in three categories: best choreographic realization, best contemporary dance performance and best female dancer.
The intention of this project is to continue with a movement research while including the originality that written play brings into the process. Therefore The Other At The Same Time is a specific working process (part of which took place while camping in countryside of south Istria), in which three Croatian dancers and two Canadian dancers are united with a larger group of permanent Ferlin's collaborators. Decision of departing in this atypical working environment, was motivated by desire to create a small working community, that would be focused only on itself. Also, it deals with the questions of community – re-questioning the conditions and qualities of social behavior of specific social groups. Those questions are delivered through physical and not textual aspect of the performance. The materials of the performance have been thus partly generated from the real situations that have happened during the camping – the shared-living by the individuals forming a group that works on a performance. Wishing to research the narrative potential of an abstract movement, devoid of any descriptive or gestural qualities and face it with a very concrete dramatic text as a conveyor of meaning, the idea of the project is to move the borders of the expected creation and perception of a theatrical event.
—
concept, choreography, directing, costumography: Matija Ferlin
performed by: Liz Kinoshita, Roberta Milevoj, Claudia Fancello, Tomislav Feller, Matija Ferlin / text: Jasna Žmak / dramaturgy: Goran Ferčec / set design: Mauricio Ferlin / graphic design: Tina Ivezić / executive production: Anika Miletić
produced by: Emanat / co-produced: Istrian National Theatre (Pula), Cankarjev dom (Ljubljana) / project partner: Zagreb Dance Center – Hrvatski institut za pokret i ples, Mediterranean Dance Center – Svetvinčenat / Financially supported by: Ministry for Education, Science, Culture and Sport RS, Municipality of Ljubljana - Department for Culture, Municipality of Pula, Canada Council for the Arts

The Independent Performing Art Scene in the Balkans: Which way to go? (conference)
8-11 November, Museum of Contemporary Art in Vojvodina
This conference should offer some of the answers about the directions of development of the independent performing art scene in the Balkans, highlight some of the opportunities that are opening, and examine some of the problems it is currently facing.
The conference will be opened with a panel discussion with a focus on networks, follwed by a discussion that will be split into 3 different groups / topics:
Venues for independent culture, Independent culture vs creative industries, Coproductions.
The evening program will include the presentation of a project from Domino in Zagreb, the Night of Performances, where several performances from Serbia and the region will be presented.

Iztok Kovač
OTTETTO (8 Swings for His Highness)
October 23, 2012 @ 8 pm – premiere
October 24, 2012 @ 8pm - reprise
Španski Borci – Big Hall, Ljubljana
The dance performance OTTETTO (8 Swings for His Highness) is built around Octet, a 16-minute musical delicacy by Igor Stravinsky from 1923, a purely structural composition void of any narrative meanings, which the composer himself called "dry, cold and transparent, like an 'extra dry' champagne".
OTTETTO by Iztok Kovač choreographically decomposes, analyses and then reconstructs and visualises this exceptional musical work.
The choreographer explores from various angles and standpoints the extant relationships of the artists involved with this composition. The performance thus yields the responses of the conductor, the eight musicians, the five dancers and the team of visual artists.
Along with the lively joint sequences these dissimilar responses are an expansion of the anticipated execution of the original work, which now has an 8-part structure for 14 performers.
In Octet, which is scored in the classical sonata form for an unusual combination of woodwind and brass instruments, Stravinsky, peculiarly, employed the technical means of baroque music. The polyphony and rhythmic complexity introduce an effect of Verfremdung (Alienation) to the select pre-romantic form, and also herald the beginning of neoclassicism in the music history.
The movement of the dancers, the international company EnKnap Group, is marked by a specific vocabulary derived from the analyses of partsfor each individual instrument in Stravinsky's Octet, which both emphasisesthe abstract structure of the composition and renders it alien. The movement is frequently subjected to a strict periodic rhythm of the metronome, the presence of the maestro, and a historical reference to the composer's personality.
The composition Octet by Stravinsky, which was received with general dismay and considered a bad joke in his time, in OTTETTO (8 Swings for His Highness) is played live on stage by the Slovenian music ensemble Festine conducted by Živa Ploj Peršuh.
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Concept, choreography: Iztok Kovač; Dancers: EnKnap Group (Luke Thomas Dunne, Ida Hellsten, Bence Mezei, Ana Štefanec, TamásTuza); Conductor: Živa Ploj Peršuh; Musicans: ensemble Festine; Videography, screens: Komposter; Light Design: Jaka Šimenc; Set Design: Jaka Šimenc, Komposter, Iztok Kovač; Costume Design: Valter Kobal; Articulation of Contents: Mirta Zajc, Iztok Kovač; Rehearsal Director: Tanja Skok
Production: EN-KNAP; Coproduction: Društvo ustvarjalcev sodobne slovenske kulture – Delavnica

Mokhallad Rasem
Waiting – Serbian / Belgian research project
November 2012 (start)
Novi Sad
"Waiting" is a research project curated by Mokhallad Rasem (BE). This actor-director previously worked as a director with the National Theatre of Baghdad, but he has lived and worked in Belgium since 2006. His first major piece in Belgium, Iraqi Ghosts, was selected for the 2010 FlemishTheatre Festival as one of the eleven most remarkable productions. During the recent wars

in his country, surrealism and reality became one in an explosive clash of different realities through the incredible violence and growing alienation.

For that reason, in this project, he will ask 4 other artists to each reflect, in 20 minutes, on "waiting", based on Beckett's Waiting for Godot. Besides himself, a collaborating trio of students from RITS-Brussels (BE), ITS DNA-Amsterdam (NL) and ISADAC-Rabat (MA), Youssef Abbas (NL), Kristian Al-Droubi (RS), and Lotte van den Berg (BE/NL) will each direct one part of the performance. Compiling these interdependent productions Rasem will offer us a one-night festival where the views of different producers are juxtaposed in an attempt to make the audience experience what waiting can mean for any of us.

Production: Moussem in cooperation with Toneelhuis & Association Kulturanova
with the support of the European Union (project moussem.eu)

Kulturanova, as co-producer, will be in charge of producing 1 part (with Nusha Obračević & Kristian Al Droubi) and presenting the whole production in Serbia between June 10 – July 31, 2013. The premiere will be in Antwerp on June 8, 2013.

Art and the Public Good
bilingual issue of **TKH (Walking Theory) Journal for Performing Arts Theory (no.20)**
Edited by: Bojana Cvejić and Marko Kostanić
Authors: Sezgin Boynik, Bojana Cvejić, Boris Čučković, Igor Dobričić, Siniša Ilić, Mario Kikaš, Marko Kostanić, Bruno Latour, Sigrid Merx, Marta Popivoda, Boris Postnikov, Nina Power, Ana Vujanović, Vesna Vuković.
The complete issue along with previous issues of TkH Journal are available online at
www.tkh-generator.net

Art and the Public Good: Introductory Remarks *(excerpt)*
By Bojana Cvejić and Marko Kostanić

Following the transformation of the global financial crisis into the global fiscal crisis, which was caused by using public money to bail out banks, as well as by falling tax revenues owing to the recession, governments across Europe launched their so-called austerity measures. Those measures, whose proclaimed aim is to boost the competitiveness of certain European states and avoid the downgrading of their credit ratings, mostly come down to lowering the cost of labour and privatising state-owned companies, the public sector and resources. Since the latest crisis arrived at a time when the left has been thoroughly deformed and destroyed by the neoliberal counterrevolution and the collapse of real-socialist countries, its regrouping and devising strategies of resistance to the austerity measures could only be articulated from a defensive perspective, however massive some of the protests might be. Across Europe, those different forms of protests, concerning issues ranging from education to urban planning, have spawned a common declarative denominator: the public good. Having served well for agitation and mobilisation purposes, the phrase should now become a site of hegemonic struggle regarding its definition and instrumentalisation, as productive as possible, for struggles that are yet to come. In today's struggles for that which is collectively and democratically decided as part of the sphere of the public good, the first step should be to analyse the historical processes and political struggles that ground the social and institutional relations in which a given sector or resource is reproduced.

Among the arts, it is the non-mainstream, experimental segment of the performance field that has borne the brunt of the austerity measures, whereas Europe's performance artists, cultural workers, programmers, and producers have found themselves politically ill-equipped to act. The trend, which has been defended under the Post-Operaist Marxist concept of "immaterial labour" as characteristic of performance practice more than any other art, has not only helped us to understand how the temporal conditions of work in performance make it precarious, but also weakened the sense of belonging to a place and entitlement to material means of production on the part of artists. Local communities are thus underrated in favour of international, non-localisable actors and projects, whereby the definition of the "common" is relegated to "the commons", in other words the free distribution of performance by-products, such as methodological tools etc. In a structural sense, the commons cannot adequately replace the public good. Because it distinguishes and defends itself by means of the indeterminacy of value, the commons is able to remain in the private domain, that is, within networks of participating individuals, often bringing the financial and technical costs of work down to a minimum of indispensible funds, thereby relieving the state of its responsibility toward art.

Attempts at linking the struggle for art and culture as a public good with, for instance, the struggle for free education or healthcare, as well as attempts by different agents in the art field to organise a common front, typically produce irresolvable contradictions. As we already pointed out, the public good is not a given, but always a result of political struggles and historical processes; therefore, articulating art as a public good tolerates no methodologies predicated on finding an inherent ahistorical quality of art that might legitimise it as a public good. Rather, one must examine those historical processes, political struggles, and social conditions from the perspective of a normatively and abstractly, publicly funded, and democratically governed artistic production accessible to all, because those processes, struggles, and conditions produced that situation in the first place. Above all, one must also bear in mind that those processes are not irreversible. The way in which art might function as a public good is a matter of political struggles that are yet to come, not of definitions laid out in advance.

BALCAN CAN CONTEM–PORARY

ISSUE 7
September – November, 2012